

[Melinda Parker]

Louisiana Folklore [III-?] MELINDA PARKER

I ain't in service now because I had pneumonia of the heart two years ago an' I can only do light work. That's why I'm livin' in this house because it's low an the ground an' I don't, have any steps to go up. Before I took sick, I lived in a nice raised cottage.

The girl that stays here, Emily, she's French an' she's light-colored so she gets good jobs. They don't last long because they're usually with people that come down for a few weeks but while they do, she gets good money an' she's always gettin' calls. Emily has been livin' with us for three years an' whenever she's workin', she pays well. When she ain't, she cleans up the house an' does the cookin' an' helps us with whatever she can. She's done a lot of personal maidin' at the Hotel an' she is tryin' to get me in there as a regular maid. Of course, there a lot of people who come an' register there who ain't husband an' wife an' everybody knows it, but they don't bother them. It's all right if you want to do things like that an' do them in a refined way an' takes them to a hotel. My mother always told us when we were children, "Don't be like the dog an' lay down on the hay an' can't eat it an' growl to keep the ox from eatin' it." My mother used to tell us little sayin's like that an' I didn't realize how true they were until I growed to matile age.

The other day Emily got a call to go work in the French Quarters, but after she talked with her friends, they told her that there was a lot of dope smugglers an' everybody else that has apartments in them buildin's so she got kinda scared an' didn't go. But since then she found out different an' is sorry she didn't take that place. I told her that anybody who can live in one of them big apartments, where twelve to fifteen families lives by the church, gotta be nice to afford that. There's one thing I'll tell you, that the sportin' people pays you good money an' they always give you good tips.

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I ain't seen the Lord in flesh but I seen Him in the spirit an' whenever 2 I gets in trouble, I just sits right in my room an' talks to Him an' He talks back to me. I tell you I seen my mother lot of times since she died. Once when I was livin' on Magnolia Street I was so sick I couldn't hold anythin' on my stomach for days. Somebody had told my husband to make me some orange skin tea to settle my stomach, so while he was makin' the tea, all of a sudden I heard a knocking at the back door an' I saw a great big bird on the transom of my door. That bird flew in the room an' sat right on the end of my bed an' looked at me square in the eye. As it looked at me, it turned into my mother an' she had a glass in her hand an' it looked like it had a yolk of an egg in it. She comes to me an' feeds me with a spoon an' I ate every bit of that egg yolk. Then she charged back into a bird an' flew out the transom. As she left she told me that that egg was gonna make me well. The bird looked like a dove. When my husband came back into the room I was layin' there smilin' with my eyes closed an' he thought I was dyin'. He asked me was I sleepin' an' I said no an' I told him what had happened an' to give me that tea. I drank everybit of it an' from that time I held everythin' I ate on my stomach an' in no time I was well. I ain't had any stomach trouble since. The only spell of sickness I ever had after that was the pneumonia of the heart. Begin [?]

Just the other day I was sitting down here by my stove, prayin' to the Lord, when who walks in the door but my brother that's dead. He used to live in Detroit so I always called him a snowdigger. I says to him, "What you doin' down here now, you snowdigger?" An' he says, "I just had some money an' I thought I'd come an' give it to you." An' he puts five dollars in my lap. Just then it looked to me like brother that's a minister comes in the door an' he turns to my brother an' says, "Jim, what you doin' here?" An' he says, "I come to give Melinda some money." So my brother that's a minister, he gives me five dollars. I got so excited about havin' that money for Christmas that I went out the house an' was goin' to tell my friend an' was all the way to Saratoga Street an' the money 3 was gone. My friends told me that my brother had come to take somebody out the house but I told them no that he meant good by that. I told my brother that's a minister about it on Christmas Day an'

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he said that Jim knew that I'm lookin' for a job an' that his spirit is goin' to help me find one soon. I know I'll never want because I have promised to give my life to the Lord an' to help Him an' I know He's gonna help me when I need it.

My husband, Harry Parker, died on October 19, 1918. He was workin' at the shipyards in Algiers an' he got the flu an' in four days, he was dead from pneumonia. I was always a good church worker an' one night I went out to a meetin' an' when I came back, I found him in bed with fever. I got some three six's (666) an' gave it to him an' the next mornin' he was burnin' up the bed with fever. I called the doctor but he never gave me any hope. My husband always used to tease me an' said that I was gonna wear myself out runnin' to church all the time. My husband was a Cathlic an' he went to his church and duties but his people never forgave him for marryin' a Baptist girl an' bein' married by the Baptist minister. He was buried in the Cathlic church. On Good Fridays, I used to go with him an' make the Way of the Cross an' I went to church with him plenty of times.

My mother never let us eat a speck of meat on Good Friday an' she never took a drop of food from 12 o'clock on the Thursday night til Easter Saturday mornin'. She always said that you could deprive yourself of food one day a year for the Lord. If I had been raised in the Cathlic faith, I woulda been just as good a Cathlic, but the only trouble with the Cathlic religion is that you can't sing an' testify, an' when the spirit takes you, you can't shout to the Lord.

I never remarried after my husband died an' everybody told me I was cut to be an old maid. I've had plenty of friends an' lot of them wanted to marry me, but I guess I'm satisfied like I'm goin'. I have a good house to live in and nice clothes to wear an' good food to eat an' Mary rakes plenty enough to 4 to give us all we want an' then I do a day's work.

I tell you there was a man works in the Customhouse that was very much in love with me. He has a wife an' two children. He wanted to be my friend an' told me that he would give me everythin' I wanted an' his wife would never know about it. Well, I thought about it an'

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thought about it, an' then I told him that since he had children to support that I didn't think that the Lord would let that money do me any good an' now his daughter's goin' to Dillard University. I am a legal widow an' if anybody wants you to do a little sweetheartin' with them an' they ain't got no obligations an' want to give you twenty-five dollars a month for sweetheartin', you ain't doin' any wrong, it's all right.